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TAGS: PHUM CU

SUBJECT: GETTING ANTUNEZ OFF THE ISLAND

Classified By: COM: Michael E. Parmly: For reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In spite of chronic health problems and in the face of increased pressure from the GOC, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez) continues to press forward with his campaigns to force change in Cuba. We believe that he urgently needs medical attention off the island. He is taking the steps needed to leave, but the last, and perhaps largest hurdle he has to clear is receipt of his exit visa from the GOC. Antunez himself is unlikely to back off of his activities in order to get that exit visa. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In his latest act of protest against the Cuban regime, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez) called for a peaceful demonstration on January 28 in the province of Sancti Spiritus to commemorate the anniversary of Jose Marti's birthday. Antunez contacted opposition members in the central provinces. Several were unable to leave their homes under threat of detention. According to dissidents Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR), Noelia Pedraza Jimenez, and Antunez himself, some were detained while en route, others assaulted and detained. They said state security and police acted in close coordination to prevent the dissidents from assembling. Most of the dissidents involved were briefly detained and then released.

¶3. (C) Although Antunez was not arrested, he was detained twice on January 28. After the second time he was put under house arrest. While it is true that Antunez is detained on a regular basis -- eight times since he was released from prison last April, this time the GOC raised the level of intimidation by charging him with disobedience, contempt and disorderly conduct. His presence in Havana on February 1 shows he does not intend to abide by orders from the GOC. Antunez informed us that, following his visit with us, he would visit the Spanish embassy accompanied by MBR, and then go to Villa Marista (state security headquarters). His intended purpose is to inform the GOC that he will no longer tolerate their attempts to suppress his individual liberties.

When asked how he planned to accomplish this, Antunez mentioned possibilities such as hunger strike and protest on Revolution Square, but in any event, something that would catch the regime's attention.

¶4. (C) In spite of his constant run-ins with the GOC, Antunez succeeded in obtaining passports for himself and his wife last week. They intend to request an exit permit from the GOC for Antunez to seek medical treatment in the U.S., on the condition that he will only leave the island if the regime formally commits to allowing his return.

¶5. (C) Comment: During this latest of Antunez's many acts of defiance, the regime deployed carefully coordinated assets to ensure that his public demonstration did not take place. Once again, the GOC was successful in controlling Antunez and his supporters. This, however, is becoming increasingly hard to do without cracking down, especially when Antunez has not

intention of letting up. In spite of the high level of activity he maintains, Antunez is not a healthy man. We believe it is critical that he get to the U.S. for medical treatment. At this point, all that stands between him and that goal is a lack of an exit visa from the GOC. Antunez will not even slow his activities in order to achieve that goal. We cannot do anything about how Antunez acts (and we would not want to suppress him in any way). However, at this point, any public comment by us will make things worse.

Antunez is already a pain in the neck for the regime, and they may decide not to issue an exit visa in any case, but a statement by us now would force them into a position of having to back down to U.S. pressure in order to grant the exit visa.

PARMLY